# WOMEN AS WORLD BUILDERS

FLOYD DELL

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# WOMEN AS WORLD BUILDERS

# Women as World Builders

Studies in Modern Feminism

BY
FLOYD DELL

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# Women as World Builders

## CHAPTER I

### THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

THE feminist movement can be dealt with in two ways: it can be treated as a sociological abstraction, and discussed at length in heavy monographs; or it can be taken as the sum of the action of a lot of women, and taken account of in the lives of individual women. The latter way would be called "journalistic," had not the late William James used it in his "Varieties of Religious Experience." It is a method which preserves the individual flavor, the personal tone and color, which, after all, are the life of any movement. It is, therefore, the method I have chosen for this book.

The ten women whom I have chosen are representative: they give the quality of the woman's movement of today. Charlotte Perkins Gilman — Jane Addams — Emmeline Pankhurst — Olive Schreiner — Isadora Duncan — Beatrice Webb — Emma Goldman — Margaret Dreier Robins — Ellen Key: surely in these women,* if anywhere, is to be found the soul of modern feminism!

One may inquire why certain other names are not included. There is Maria Montessori, for instance. Her ideas on the education of children are of the utmost importance, and their difference from those of Froebel is another illustration of the difference between the practical minds of women and the idealistic minds of men. But Madame Montessori's relation to the feminist movement is, after all, ancillary. A tremendous lot remains to be done in the way of coöperation for the management of house-

*See also the chapter "Freewomen and Dora Marsden."

holds and the education of children before women who are wives and mothers will be set free to take their part in the work of the outside world. But it is the setting of mothers free, and not the specific kind of education which their children are to receive, which is of interest to us here.

Again, one may inquire why, since I have not blinked the fact that the feminist movement is making for a revolution of values in sex — why I have not included any woman who has distinguished herself by defying antiquated conventions which are supposed to rule the relations of the sexes. This requires a serious answer. The adjustment of one's social and personal relations, so far as may be, to accord with one's own convictions — that is not feminism, in my opinion: it is only common sense. The attempt to discover how far social laws and traditions must be changed to accord with the new position of women in society — that is a

different thing, and I have dealt with it in the paper on Ellen Key.

Another reason is my belief that it is with woman as producer that we are concerned in a study of feminism, rather than with woman as lover. The woman who finds her work will find her love — and I do not doubt will cherish it bravely. But the woman who sets her love above everything else I would gently dismiss from our present consideration as belonging to the courtesan type.

It is not very well understood what the courtesan really is, and so I pause to describe her briefly. It is not necessary to transgress certain moral customs to be a courtesan; on the other hand, the term may accurately be applied to women of irreproachable morals. There are some women who find their destiny in the bearing and rearing of children, others who demand independent work like men, and still others who make a career of charming, stimulating, and

comforting men. These types, of course, merge and combine; and then there is that vast class of women who belong to none of these types — who are not good for anything!

The first of these types may be called the mother type, the second the worker type, and the third — the kind of women which is not drawn either to motherhood or to work, but which is greatly attracted to men and which possesses special qualities of sympathy, stimulus, and charm, and is content with the more or less disinterested exercise of these qualities — this may without prejudice be called the courtesan type. It will be seen that the courtesan qualities may find play as well within legal marriage as without, and that the transgression of certain moral customs is only incidental to the type. Where circumstances encourage it, and where the moral tradition is weakened by experience or temperament, the moral cus-

toms will be transgressed: but it is the human qualities of companionship, and not the economic basis of that companionship, which is the essential thing.

When a girl with such qualities marries, and she usually marries, much depends upon the character of her husband. If her husband appreciates her, if he does not expect her to give up her career of charming straightway, and restrict herself to cooking, sewing, and the incubating of babies; and, furthermore, if he does not baffle those qualities in his wife by sheer failure in his own career, then there is a happy and virtuous marriage. Otherwise, there is separation or divorce, and the woman sometimes becomes the companion of another man without the sanction of law. But she has been, it will be perceived, a courtesan all along. And while I do not wish to seem to deprecate her comfortable qualities, she does not come in the scope of this inquiry.

But there is another figure which I wish I had been able to include. Not wishing to involve my publisher in a libel suit, I refrain. She is the young woman of the leisure class, whose actions, as represented to us in the yellow journals, shock or divert us, according to our temperaments. I confess to having the greatest sympathy for her, and in her endeavor to create a livelier, a more hilarious and human morale, she is doing, I feel, a real service to the cause of women. Our American pseudo-aristocracy is capable to teach us, despite its fantastic excesses, how to play. And emancipation from middle-class standards of taste, morality, and intellect is, so far as it goes, a good thing. "Too many cocktails," a lady averred to me the other day, "is better than smugness; risque conversation far better than none at all." And that celebrated "public-be-damned" attitude of the pseudo-aristocracy is a great moral improvement

over the cowardly, hysterical fear of the neighbors which prevails in the middle class.

But, if I sympathize with the "hell raising" tendency — no other phrase describes it — of the young woman of the leisure class, I have more pity than sympathy for the one who is trying to realize the ideal of the "salon." For she must, after sad experience and bitter disillusionment, be content with the tawdry activities which, relieved by the orgiastic outbreaks alluded to above, constitute social life in America.

The establishment of a salon is, in itself, a healthful ideal. If civilization were destroyed, and rebuilt on any plan, the tradition of the salon would be a good starting point for the creation of a medium of satisfying social intercourse. Social intercourse we must have, or the best of us lapse into boorishness. The ego only properly functions in contact with other and various egos. So that, in any case, we should have to have

something in the nature of our contemporary "society." All the more do we need "society" at present, since those ancient institutions, the church and the café, have almost entirely lost the character of real social centers.

Recognizing this need, and supposing the best intentions in the world, what can people do at present in the creation of a "society" which shall be useful to the community instead of a laughing stock for the intelligent?

That is a fair question. Many an ambitious and idealistic young American matron has tried to solve it. She has found that the materials were a little scarce—the people who could talk brilliantly are very rare. But brilliancy is always a miracle, and it can be dispensed with. The real trouble lies elsewhere.

The fact is that in our present industrial system the need for social life is in inverse ratio to the opportunity for it. The people

who need social intercourse are those who do hard work. The people who have most money and leisure, the most opportunity for social life, are those who have too much of it, anyway. Moreover—and this is an important point—no one profits less by leisure and money than those who have a great deal of it. Consequently, the basis of "society" today is a class of people naturally and inevitably inferior. It is this class which dominates "society," which gives the tone, and which sets the standard. So long, then, as "society" is dominated by inferiors, intelligent men and women will not be inclined to waste what time they have for social intercourse in such stupid activities as those that "society" can furnish. They will flock by themselves, and if they become undemocratic and unsocial as a result, that will appear to them the lesser evil. So that, however catholic our standards, the saloniere, as a

bounden failure, has no place in this transcript of feminism.

One thing will be observed with regard to these following papers — though they are imbued with an intense interest in women, they are devoid of the spirit of Romance. I mean that attitude toward woman which accepts her sex as a miraculous justification for her existence, the belief that being a woman is a virtue in itself, apart from the possession of other qualities: in short, woman-worship. The reverence for woman as virgin, or wife, or mother, irrespective of her capacities as friend or leader or servant — that is Romance. It is an attitude which, discovered in the Middle Ages, has added a new glamour to existence. To woman as a superior being, a divinity, one may look for inspiration — and receive it. For those who cannot be fired by an abstract idea, she gives to imagination "some pure light in human

form to fix it." She is the sustenance of hungry souls. Believe in her and you shall be saved — so runs the gospel of Petrarch, of Dante, of Browning, of George Meredith.

So runs not mine. I have hearkened to the voice of modern science, which tells me that woman is an inferior being, with a weak body, a stunted mind, poor in creative power, poor in imagination, poor in critical capacity — a being who does not know how to work, nor how to talk, nor how to play! I hope no one will imagine that I am making these charges up maliciously out of my own head: such a notion would indicate that a century of pamphleteering on the woman question had made no impression on a mind saturated in the ideology of popular fiction.

But — I have hearkened even more eagerly to the voice of sociology, which tells me of woman's wonderful possibilities. It is with these possibilities that this book is, in the main, concerned.

But first the explanation of why I, a man, write these articles on feminism. It involves the betrayal of a secret: the secret, that is, of the apparent indifference or even hostility of men toward the woman's movement. The fact is, as has been bitterly recited by the rebellious leaders of their sex, that women have always been what man wanted them to be — have changed to suit his changing ideals. The fact is, furthermore, that the woman's movement of today is but another example of that readiness of women to adapt themselves to a masculine demand.

Men are tired of subservient women; or, to speak more exactly, of the seemingly subservient woman who effects her will by stealth — the pretty slave with all the slave's subtlety and cleverness. So long as it was possible for men to imagine themselves masters, they were satisfied. But when they found out that they were dupes, they wanted a change. If only for self-protection, they

desired to find in woman a comrade and an equal. In reality they desired it because it promised to be more fun.

So that we have as the motive behind the rebellion of women an obscure rebellion of men. Why, then, have men appeared hostile to the woman's rebellion? Because what men desire are real individuals who have achieved their own freedom. It will not do to pluck freedom like a flower and give it to the lady with a polite bow. She must fight for it.

We are, to tell the truth, a little afraid that unless the struggle is one which will call upon all her powers, which will try her to the utmost, she will fall short of becoming that self-sufficient, able, broadly imaginative and healthy-minded creature upon whom we have set our masculine desire.

It is, then, as a phase of the great human renaissance inaugurated by men that the woman's movement deserves to be consid-

ered. And what more fitting than that a man should sit in judgment upon the contemporary aspects of that movement, weighing out approval or disapproval! Such criticism is not a masculine impertinence but a masculine right, a right properly pertaining to those who are responsible for the movement, and whose demands it must ultimately fulfill.

## CHAPTER II

### CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN

OF THE women who represent and carry on this many-sided movement today, the first to be considered from this masculine viewpoint should, I think, be Charlotte Perkins Gilman. For she is, to a superficial view, the most intransigent feminist of them all, the one most exclusively concerned with the improvement of the lot of woman, the least likely to compromise at the instance of man, child, church, state, or devil.

Mrs. Gilman is the author of "Women and Economics" and several other books of theory, "What Diantha Did" and several other books of fiction; she is the editor and publisher of a remarkable journal, The Fore-

runner, the whole varied contents of which is written by herself; she has a couple of plays to her credit, and she has published a book of poems. If in spite of all this publicity it is still possible to misunderstand the attitude of Mrs. Gilman, I can only suppose it to be because her poetry is less well known than her prose. For in this book of verse, "In This Our World," Mrs. Gilman has so completely justified herself that no man need ever be afraid of her — nor any woman who, having a lingering tenderness for the other sex, would object to living in a beehive world, full of raging efficient females, with the males relegated to the position of drones.

Of course, I do but jest when I speak of this fear; but there is, to the ordinary male, something curiously objectionable at the first glance in Mrs. Gilman's arguments, whether they are for coöperative kitchens or for the labor of women outside the home.

And the reason for that objection lies precisely in the fact that her plans seem to be made in a complete forgetfulness of him and his interests. It all has the air of a feminine plot. The coöperative kitchens, and the labor by which women's economic independence is to be achieved, seem the means to an end.

And so they are. But the end, as revealed in Mrs. Gilman's poems, is that one which all intelligent men must desire. I do not know whether or not the more elaborate coöperative schemes of Mrs. Gilman are practical; and I fancy that she rather exaggerates the possibilities of independent work for women who have or intend to have children. But the spirit behind these plans is one which cannot but be in the greatest degree stimulating and beneficent in its effect upon her sex.

For Mrs. Gilman is, first of all, a poet, an idealist. She is a lover of life. She rejoices

in beauty and daring and achievement, in all the fine and splendid things of the world. She does not merely disapprove of the contemporary "home" as wasteful and inefficient—she hates it because it vulgarizes life. In this "home," this private food-preparing and baby-rearing establishment, she sees a machine which breaks down all that is good and noble in women, which degrades and pettifies them. The contrast between the instinctive ideals of young women and the sordid realities into which housekeeping plunges them is to her intolerable. And in the best satirical verses of modern times she ridicules these unnecessary shames. In one spirited piece she points out that the soap-vat, the pickle-tub, even the loom and wheel, have lost their sanctity, have been banished to shops and factories:

> But bow ye down to the Holy Stove,
> The Altar of the Home!

The real feeling of Mrs. Gilman is revealed in these lines, which voice, indeed, the angry mood of many an outraged housewife who finds herself the serf of a contraption of cast-iron:

> . . . We toil to keep the altar crowned
> With dishes new and nice,
> And Art and Love, and Time and Truth,
> We offer up, with Health and Youth
> In daily sacrifice.

Mrs. Gilman is not under the illusion that the conditions of work outside the home are perfect; she is, indeed, a socialist, and as such is engaged in the great task of revolutionizing the basis of modern industry. But she has looked into women's souls, and turned away in disgust at the likeness of a dirty kitchen which those souls present.

Into these lives corrupted by the influences of the "home" nothing can come unspoiled —nothing can enter in its original stature and beauty. She says:

Birth comes. Birth —
The breathing re-creation of the earth!
All earth, all sky, all God, life's sweet deep whole,
Newborn again to each new soul!
" Oh, are you? What a shame! Too bad, my dear!
How well you stand it, too! It's very queer
The dreadful trials women have to carry;
But you can't always help it when you marry.
Oh, what a sweet layette! What lovely socks!
What an exquisite puff and powder box!
Who is your doctor? Yes, his skill's immense —
But it's a dreadful danger and expense!"

And so with love, and death, and work — all are smutted and debased. And her revolt is a revolt against that which smuts and debases them — against those artificial channels which break up the strong, pure stream of woman's energy into a thousand little stagnant canals, covered with spiritual pond-scum.

It is a part of her idealism to conceive life in terms of war. So it is that she scorns compromise, for in war compromise is treason. And so it is that she has heart for the

long, slow marshaling of forces, and the dingy details of the commissariat—for these things are necessary if the cry of victory is ever to ring out over the battlefield. Some of her phrases have so militant an air that they seem to have been born among the captains and the shouting. They make us ashamed of our vicious civilian comfort.

Mrs. Gilman's attitude toward the bearing and rearing of children is easy to misapprehend. She does seem to relegate these things to the background of women's lives. She does deny to these things a tremendous importance. Why, she asks, is it so important that women should bear and rear children to live lives as empty and poor as their own? Surely, she says, it is more important to make life something worth giving to children! No, she insists, it is not sufficient to be a mother: an oyster can be a mother. It is necessary that a woman

should be a person as well as a mother. She must know and do.

And as for the ideal of love which is founded on masculine privilege, she satirizes it very effectively in some verses entitled "Wedded Bliss":

"O come and be my mate!" said the Eagle to the Hen;
"I love to soar, but then
I want my mate to rest
Forever in the nest!"
Said the Hen, "I cannot fly
I have no wish to try,
But I joy to see my mate careering through the sky!"
They wed, and cried, "Ah, this is Love, my own!"
And the Hen sat, the Eagle soared, alone.

Woman, in Mrs. Gilman's view, must not be content with Hendom: the sky is her province, too. Of all base domesticity, all degrading love, she is the enemy. She gives her approval only to that work which has in it something high and free, and that love which is the dalliance of the eagles.

## CHAPTER III

### EMMELINE PANKHURST AND JANE ADDAMS

A FEW months ago it was rather the fashion to reply to some political verses by Mr. Kipling which assumed to show that women should not be given the ballot, and which had as their refrain:

> The female of the species is more deadly than the male!

But it seems that no one pointed out that this fact, even in the limited sense in which it is a fact in the human species, is an argument for giving women the vote.

For if women are, as Mr. Kipling says, lacking in a sense of abstract justice, in patience, in the spirit of compromise; if they are violent and unscrupulous in gaining an end upon which they have set their hearts,

then by all means they should be rendered comparatively harmless by being given the ballot. For it is characteristic of a republic that its political machinery, created in order to carry out the will of the people, comes to respond with difficulty to that will, while being perfectly susceptible to other influences. Republican government, when not modified by drastic democratic devices, is an expensive, cumbrous, and highly inefficient method of carrying out the popular will; and casting a vote is like nothing so much as casting bread upon the waters. It shall return—after many days. By voting, by exercising an infinitesimal pressure on our complex, slow-moving political mechanism, one cannot—it is a sad fact—do much good; but one cannot—and it should encourage the pessimistic Mr. Kipling—one cannot, even though a woman, do much harm.

This is not, however, a disquisition on

woman suffrage. There is only one argument for woman suffrage: women want it; there are no arguments against it. But one may profitably inquire, What will be the effect of the emergence of women into politics upon politics itself? And one may hope to find an answer in the temperament and career of certain representative leaders of the woman's movement. Let us accordingly turn to the accredited leader of the English "votes for women" movement, and to the woman in the American movement who is best known to the public.

That Miss Jane Addams has become known chiefly through other activities does not matter here. It is temperament and career in which we are immediately interested. What is perhaps the most outstanding fact in the temperament of Miss Addams is revealed only indirectly in her autobiography: it may be called the passion of conciliation.

Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst has by her actions written herself down for a fighter. She has but recently been released from Holloway jail, where she was serving a term of imprisonment for "conspiracy and violence." In a book by H. G. Wells, which contains a very bitter attack on the woman's suffrage movement (I refer to "Ann Veronica"), she is described as "implacable"; and I believe that it is she to whom Mr. Wells refers as being "as incapable of argument as a steam roller broken loose." The same things might have been said of Sherman on his dreadful march to the sea. These phrases, malicious as they are, contain what I am inclined to accept as an accurate description of Mrs. Pankhurst's temperament.

No one would call Mrs. Pankhurst a conciliator. And no one would call Miss Addams "implacable." It is not intended to suggest that Miss Addams is one of those

inveterate compromisers who prefer a bad peace to a good war. But she has the gift of imaginative sympathy; and it is impossible for her to have toward either party in a conflict the cold hostility which each party has for the other. She sees both sides; and even though one side is the wrong side, she cannot help seeing why its partisans believe in it.

"If the under dog were always right," Miss Addams has said, "one might quite easily try to defend him. The trouble is that very often he is but obscurely right, sometimes only partially right, and often quite wrong, but perhaps he is never so altogether wrong and pig-headed and utterly reprehensible as he is represented to be by those who add the possession of prejudice to the other almost insuperable difficulties in understanding him."

Miss Addams has taken in good faith the social settlement ideal—"to span the gulf between the rich and the poor, or between

those who have had cultural opportunities and those who have not, by the process of neighborliness." In her writings, as in her work, there is never sounded the note of defiance. Even in defense of the social settlement and its methods of conciliation (which have been venomously assailed by the newspapers during Chicago's fits of temporary insanity, as in the Averbuch case), Miss Addams has not become militant. She has never ceased to be serenely reasonable.

But when one comes to ask how powerful Miss Addams' example has been, one is forced to admit that it has been limited. There are two other settlement houses in Chicago which are managed in the spirit of Hull House. But all the others — and there are about forty settlement houses in the city — have discarded almost openly the principle of conciliation. They are efficient, or religious, or something else, but they are afraid of being too sympathetic with the

working class. They do not, for instance, permit labor unions to meet in their halls. The splendid social idealism of the '80s, of which Miss Addams is representative, has disappeared, leaving two sides angry and hostile and with none but Miss Addams believing in the possibility of finding any common ground for action. One event after another from the Pullman strike to the Averbuch case has brought this hostility out into the open, with Miss Addams occupying neutral ground, and left high and dry upon it.

It is the fact that Miss Addams has not been able to imbue the movement in which she is a leader with her own spirit. Her career has been successful only so far as individual genius could make it sucessful. If one compares her achievement to that of Mrs. Pankhurst, one sees that the latter is startingly social in its nature.

For Mrs. Pankhurst has called upon

women to be like herself, to display her own Amazonian qualities. She called upon shop girls and college students and wives and old women to make physical assaults on cabinet ministers, to raid parliament and fight with policemen, to destroy property and go to prison, to endure almost every indignity from the mobs and from their jailers, to suffer in health and perhaps to die, exactly as soldiers suffer and die in a campaign.

And they did. They answered her call by the thousands. They have fought and suffered, and some of them have died. If this had been the result of individual genius in Mrs. Pankhurst, transforming peaceful girls into fighters out of hand, she would be the most extraordinary person of the age. But it is impossible to believe that all this militancy was created out of the void. It was simply awakened where it lay sleeping in these women's hearts.

Mrs. Pankhurst has performed no

miracle. She has only shown to us the truth which we have blindly refused to see. She has had the insight to recognize in women generally the same fighting spirit which she found in herself, and the courage to draw upon it. She has enabled us to see what women really are like, just as Miss Addams has by her magnificent anomalies shown us what women are not like.

Can anyone doubt this? Can anyone, seeing the lone eminence of Miss Addams, assert that imaginative sympathy, patience, and the spirit of conciliation are the ordinary traits of women? Can anyone, seeing the battle frenzy which Mrs. Pankhurst has evoked with a signal in thousands of ordinary Englishwomen, deny that women have a fighting soul?

And can anyone doubt the effect which the emergence of women into politics will have, eventually, on politics? Eventually, for in spite of their boasted independence

the decorous example of men will rule them at first. But when they have become used to politics — well, we shall find that we have harnessed an unruly Niagara!

In women as voters we shall have an element impatient of restraint, straining at the rules of procedure, cynical of excuses for inaction; not always by any means on the side of progress; making every mistake possible to ignorance and self-conceit; but transforming our politics from a vicious end to an efficient means — from a cancer into an organ.

This, with but little doubt, is the historic mission of women. They will not escape a certain taming by politics. But that they should be permanently tamed I find impossible to believe. Rather they will subdue it to their purposes, remold it nearer to their hearts' desire, change it as men would never dream of changing it, wreck it savagely in the face of our masculine protest and mer-

rily rebuild it anew in the face of our despair. With their aid we may at last achieve what we seem to be unable to achieve unaided — a democracy.

Meanwhile let us understand this suffrage movement. Let us understand that we have in militancy rather than in conciliation, in action rather than in wisdom, the keynote of woman in politics. And we males, who have so long played in our politics at innocent games of war, we shall have an opportunity to fight in earnest at the side of the Valkyrs.

## CHAPTER IV

### OLIVE SCHREINER AND ISADORA DUNCAN

I HOPE that no one will see in the conjuncture of these names a mere wanton fantasy, or a mere sensational contrast. To me there is something extraordinarily appropriate in that conjuncture, inasmuch as the work of Olive Schreiner and the work of Isadora Duncan supplement each other.

It is the drawback of the woman's movement that in any one of its aspects (heightened and colored as such an aspect often is by the violence of propaganda) it may appear too fiercely narrow. That women should make so much fuss about getting the vote, or that they should so excite themselves over the prospect of working for wages, will appear incomprehensible to

many people who have a proper regard for art, for literature, and for the graces of social intercourse. It is only when the woman's movement is seen broadly, in a variety of its aspects, that there comes the realization that here is a cause in which every fine aspiration has a place, a cause from which sincere lovers of truth and beauty have nothing really to fear.

Mrs. Olive Schreiner stands, by virtue of her latest book, "Women and Labor," as an exponent of the doctrine that would send women into every field of economic activity; or, rather, the doctrine that finds in the forces which are driving them there a savior of her sex from the degradation of parasitism. In behalf of this doctrine she has expended all that eloquence and passion which have made her one of the figures in modern literature and a spokesman for all women who have not learned to speak that hieratic language which is heard, as the

inexpressive speech of daily life is not heard, across space and time.

Miss Isadora Duncan stands as representative of the renaissance in dancing. She has brought back to us the antique beauty of an art of which we have had only relics and memento in classic sculpture and decoration. She has made us despise the frigid artifice of the ballet, and taught us that in the natural movements of the body are contained the highest possibilities of choregraphic beauty. It has been to many of us one of the finest experiences of our lives to see, for the first time, the marble maiden of the Grecian urn come to life in her, and all the leaf-fringed legends of Arcady drift before our enamored eyes. She has touched our lives with the magic of immemorial loveliness.

But to class Olive Schreiner as a sociologist and Isadora Duncan as a dancer, to divorce them by any such categories, is to do them both an injustice. For they are sister

workers in the woman's movement. They have each shown the way to a new freedom of the body and the soul.

The woman's movement is a product of the evolutionary science of the nineteenth century. Women's rebellions there have been before, utopian visions there have been, which have contributed no little to the modern movement by the force of their tradition and ever-living spirit. No Joan of Arc has led men to victory, no Lady Godiva has sacrificed her modesty — nay, even, no courtesan has taught a feeble king how to rule his country — without feeding the flame of feminine aspiration. But it is modern science which, by giving us a new view of the body, its functions, its needs, its claim upon the world, has laid the basis for a successful feminist movement. When the true history of this movement is written it will contain more about Herbert Spencer and Walt Whitman, perhaps, than about Vic-

toria Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin. In any case, it is to the body that one looks for the Magna Charta of feminism.

The eye—that is to say—is guarantor for the safety of art in a future régime under the dominance of women; and the ear for poetry. These have their functions and their needs, and the woman of the future will not deny them.

It is the hand that Olive Schreiner would emancipate from idleness. She knows the significance of the hand in human history. It was by virtue of the hand that we, and not some other creature, gained lordship over the earth. It was the hand (marvelous instrument, coaxing out of the directing will an ever-increasing subtlety) that made possible the human brain, and all the vistas of reason and imagination by which our little lives gain their peculiar grandeur.

And this hand, if it be a woman's in the present day, is doomed to the smallest activi-

ties. "Our spinning wheels are all broken . . . Our hoes and grindstones passed from us long ago . . . Year by year, day by day, there is a silently working but determined tendency for the sphere of women's domestic labors to contract itself." Even the training of her child is taken away from the mother by the "mighty and inexorable demands of modern civilization." That condition is to her intolerable; and it is on behalf of women's empty hands that she makes her demand: "that, in that strange new world that is arising alike upon the man and the woman, where nothing is as it was, and all things are assuming new shapes and relations, that in this new world we also shall have our share of honored and socially useful human toil, our full half of the labor of the Children of Woman."

And what of Miss Duncan — what is her part in the woman's movement? In her book on "The Dance" she tells a story:

"A woman once asked me why I dance with bare feet, and I replied, 'Madam, I believe in the religion of the beauty of the human foot'; and the lady replied, 'But I do not,' and I said: 'Yet you must, Madam, for the expression and intelligence of the human foot is one of the greatest triumphs of the evolution of man.' 'But,' said the lady, 'I do not believe in the evolution of man.' At this said I, 'My task is at an end. I refer you to my most revered teachers, Mr. Charles Darwin and Mr. Ernst Haeckel—' 'But,' said the lady, 'I do not believe in Darwin and Haeckel—' At this point I could think of nothing more to say. So you see that, to convince people, I am of little value and ought not to speak."

But rather to dance! Yet it is good to find so explicit a statement of the idea which she nobly expresses in her dancing. For, as the hand is the symbol of that constructive exertion of the body which we call

work, so is the foot the symbol of that diffusive exertion of the body which we call play. Isadora Duncan would emancipate the one as Olive Schreiner would emancipate the other—to new activities and new delights.

And if such work is not a thing for itself only, but a gateway to a new world, so is such play not a thing for itself only. "It is not only a question of true art," writes Miss Duncan, "it is a question of race, of the development of the female sex to beauty and health, of the return to the original strength and the natural movements of woman's body. It is a question of the development of perfect mothers and the birth of healthy and beautiful children." Here we have an inspiriting expression of the idea which through the poems of Walt Whitman and the writings of various moderns, has renovated the modern soul and made us see, without any obscene blurring by Puritan spec-

tacles, the goodness of the whole body. This is as much a part of the woman's movement as the demand for a vote (or, rather, it is more central and essential a part); and only by realizing this is it possible to understand that movement.

The body is no longer to be separated in the thought of women from the soul: "The dancer of the future will be one whose body and soul have grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of that soul will have become the movement of the body. The dancer will not belong to a nation, but to all humanity. She will dance, not in the form of nymph, nor fairy, nor coquette, but in the form of woman in its greatest and purest expression. She will realize the mission of woman's body and the holiness of all its parts. She will dance the changing life of nature, showing how each part is transformed into the other. From all parts of her body shall shine radiant in-

telligence, bringing to the world the message of the thoughts and aspirations of thousands of women. She shall dance the freedom of woman.

"She will help womankind to a new knowledge of the possible strength and beauty of their bodies, and the relation of their bodies to the earth nature and to the children of the future. She will dance, the body emerging again from centuries of civilized forgetfulness, emerging not in the nudity of primitive man, but in a new nakedness, no longer at war with spirituality and intelligence, but joining itself forever with this intelligence in a glorious harmony.

"Oh, she is coming, the dancer of the future; the free spirit, who will inhabit the body of new women; more glorious than any woman that has yet been; more beautiful than the Egyptian, than the Greek, the early Italian, than all women of past centuries—the highest intelligence in the freest body!"

If the woman's movement means anything, it means that women are demanding everything. They will not exchange one place for another, nor give up one right to pay for another, but they will achieve all rights to which their bodies and brains give them an implicit title. They will have a larger political life, a larger motherhood, a larger social service, a larger love, and they will reconstruct or destroy institutions to that end as it becomes necessary. They will not be content with any concession or any triumph until they have conquered all experience.

## CHAPTER V

### BEATRICE WEBB AND EMMA GOLDMAN

THE careers of these two women serve admirably to exhibit the woman's movement in still another aspect, and to throw light upon the essential nature of woman's character. These careers stand in plain contrast. Beatrice Webb has compiled statistics, and Emma Goldman has preached the gospel of freedom. It remains to be shown which is the better and the more characteristically feminine gift to the world.

Beatrice Potter was the daughter of a Canadian railway president. Born in 1858, she grew up in a time when revolutionary movements were in the making. She was a pupil of Herbert Spencer, and it was perhaps from him that she learned so to respect her natural interest in facts that the brilliancy

of no generalization could lure her into forgetting them. At all events, she was captured permanently by the magic of facts. She studied working-class life in Lancashire and East London at first hand, and in 1885 joined Charles Booth in his investigations of English social conditions. These investigations (which in my amateur ignorance I always confused with those of General Booth of the Salvation Army!) were published in four large volumes entitled "Life and Labor of the People." Miss Potter's special contributions were articles on the docks, the tailoring trade, and the Jewish community. Later she published a book on "The Coöperative Movement in Great Britain." Then, in 1892, she married Sidney Webb, a man extraordinarily of her own sort, and became confirmed, if such a thing were necessary, in her statistical habit of mind.

Meanwhile, in 1883, the Fabian Society

had been founded. But first a word about statistics. "Statistics" does not mean a long list of figures. It means the spreading of knowledge of facts. Statistics may be called the dogma that knowledge is dynamic —that it is somehow operative in bringing about that great change which all intelligent people desire (and which the Fabians conceived as Socialism). The Fabian Society was founded on the dogma of statistics as on a rock. The Fabians did not start a newspaper, nor create a new political party, nor organize public meetings; but they wrote to the newspapers already in existence, ran for office on party tickets already in the field, and made speeches to other organizations. That is to say, they went about like the cuckoo, laying their statistical eggs in other people's nests and expecting to see them hatch into enlightened public opinion and progressive legislation.

Some of them hatched and some of them

didn't. The point is that we have in this section of Beatrice Webb's career something typical of herself. She has gone on, serving on government commissions, writing (with her husband) the history of Trades Unionism, patiently collecting statistics and getting them printed in black ink on white paper, making detailed plans for the abolition of poverty, and always concerning herself with the homely fact.

At the time that Beatrice Potter joined Mr. Booth in his social investigations there was a 16-year-old Jewish girl living in the German-Russian province of Kurland. A year later, in 1886, this girl, Emma Goldman by name, came to America, to escape the inevitable persecutions attending on any lover of liberty in Russia. She had been one of those who had gone "to the people"; and it was as a working girl that she came to America.

She had, that is to say, the heightened

sensibilities, the keen sympathies, of the middle class idealist, and the direct contact with the harsh realities of our social and industrial conditions which is the lot of the worker. Her first experiences in America disabused her of the traditional belief that America was a refuge where the oppressed of all lands were welcome. The treatment of immigrants aboard ship, the humiliating brutalities of the officials at Castle Garden, and the insolent tyranny of the New York police convinced her that she had simply come from one oppressed land to another.

She went to work in a clothing factory, her wages being $2.50 a week. She had ample opportunities to see the degradations of our economic system, especially as it affects women. So it was not strange that she should be drawn into the American labor movement, which was then, with the Knights of Labor, the eight-hour agitation, and the propaganda of the Socialists and the Anar-

chists, at its height. She became acquainted with various radicals, read pamphlets and books, and heard speeches. She was especially influenced by the eloquent writings of Johann Most in his journal Freiheit.

So little is known, and so much absurd nonsense is believed, about the Anarchists, that it is necessary to state dogmatically a few facts. If these facts seem odd, the reader is respectfully urged to verify them. One fact is that secret organizations of Anarchists plotting a violent overthrow of the government do not exist, and never have existed, save in the writings of Johann Most and in the imagination of the police: the whole spirit of Anarchism is opposed to such organizations. Another fact is that Anarchists do not believe in violence of any kind, or in any exercise of force; when they commit violence it is not as Anarchists, but as outraged human beings. They believe that violent reprisals are bound to be provoked

among workingmen by the tyrannies to which they are subjected; but they abjure alike the bomb and the policeman's club.

There was a brief period in which Anarchists, under the influence of Johann Most, believed in (even if they did not practice) the use of dynamite. But this period was ended, in America, by the hanging of several innocent men in Chicago in 1887; which at least served the useful purpose of showing radicals that it was a bad plan even to talk of dynamite. And this hanging, which was the end of what may be called the Anarchist "boom" in this country, was the beginning of Emma Goldman's career as a publicist.

Since 1887 the Anarchists have lost influence among workingmen until they are today negligible — unless one credits them with Syndicalism — as a factor in the labor movement. The Anarchists have, in fact, left the industrial field more and more and have entered into other kinds of propa-

ganda. They have especially "gone in for kissing games."

And Emma Goldman reflects, in her career, the change in Anarchism. She has become simply an advocate of freedom — freedom of every sort. She does not advocate violence any more than Ralph Waldo Emerson advocated violence. It is, in fact, as an essayist and speaker of the kind, if not the quality, of Emerson, Thoreau, or George Francis Train, that she is to be considered.

Aside from these activities (and the evading of our overzealous police in times of stress) she has worked as a trained nurse and midwife; she conducted a kind of radical salon in New York, frequented by such people as John Swinton and Benjamin Tucker; she traveled abroad to study social conditions; she has become conversant with such modern writings as those of Hauptmann, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Zola, and Thomas Hardy. It is stated that the "Rev. Mr.

Parkhurst, during the Lexow investigation, did his utmost to induce her to join the Vigilance Committee in order to fight Tammany Hall." She was the manager of Paul Orlenoff and Mme. Nazimova. She was a friend of Ernest Crosby. Her library, it is said, would be taken for that of a university extension lecturer on literature.

It will thus be seen that Emma Goldman is of a type familiar enough in America, and conceded a popular respect. She has a legitimate social function — that of holding before our eyes the ideal of freedom. She is licensed to taunt us with our moral cowardice, to plant in our souls the nettles of remorse at having acquiesced so tamely in the brutal artifice of present day society.

I submit the following passage from her writings ("Anarchism and Other Essays") as at once showing her difference from other radicals and exhibiting the nature of her appeal to her public:

"The misfortune of woman is not that she is unable to do the work of a man, but that she is wasting her life force to outdo him, with a tradition of centuries which has left her physically incapable of keeping pace with him. Oh, I know some have succeeded, but at what cost, at what terrific cost! The import is not the kind of work woman does, but rather the quality of the work she furnishes. She can give suffrage or the ballot no new quality, nor can she receive anything from it that will enhance her own quality. Her development, her freedom, her independence, must come from and through herself. First, by asserting herself as a personality, and not as a sex commodity. Second, by refusing the right to anyone over her body; by refusing to bear children unless she wants them; by refusing to be a servant to God, the State, society, the husband, the family, etc.; by making her life simpler, but deeper and richer. That is, by trying to

learn the meaning and substance of life in all its complexities, by freeing herself from the fear of public opinion and public condemnation. Only that, and not the ballot, will set woman free, will make her a force hitherto unknown in the world, a force for real love, for peace, for harmony; a force of divine fire, of life giving; a creator of free men and women."

There is little in this that Ibsen would not have said amen to. But—and this is the conclusion to which my chapter draws—Ibsen has said it already, and said it more powerfully. Emma Goldman—who (if among women anyone) should have for us a message of her own, striking to the heart—repeats, in a less effective cadence, what she has learned from him.

The work of Beatrice Webb is the prose of revolution. The work of Ibsen is its poetry. Beatrice Webb has performed her work—one comes to feel—as well as Ibsen

has his. And one wonders if, after all, the prose is not that which women are best endowed to succeed in.

A book review (written by a woman) which I have at hand contains some generalizations which bear on the subject. "This is a woman's book [says the reviewer], and a book which could only have been written by a woman, though it is singularly devoid of most of the qualities which are usually recognized as feminine. For romance and sentiment do not properly lie in the woman's domain. She deals, when she is herself, with the material facts of the life she knows. Her talent is to exhibit them in the remorseless light of reality and shorn of all the glamour of idealism. Great and poetical imagination rarely informs her art, but within the strictness of its limits it lives by an intense and scrupulous sincerity of observation and an uncompromising recognition of the logic of existence."

If that is true, shall we not then expect a future more largely influenced by women to have more of the hard, matter-of-fact quality, the splendid realism characteristic of woman "when she is herself"?

## CHAPTER VI

### MARGARET DREIER ROBINS

THE work of Margaret Dreier Robins has been done in the National Women's Trade Union League. It might be supposed that the aim of such an organization is sufficiently explicit in its title: to get higher wages and shorter hours. But I fancy that it would be a truer thing to say that its aim is to bring into being that ideal of American womanhood which Walt Whitman described:

They are not one jot less than I am,
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike, retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,

They are ultimate in their own right — they are calm, clear, well-possessed of themselves.

When Whitman made this magnificent prophecy for American womanhood the Civil War had not been fought and its economic consequences were unguessed at. The factory system, which had come into England in the last century, bringing with it the most unspeakable exploitation of women and children, had hardly gained a foothold in this country. In 1840, of the seven employments open to women (teaching, needlework, keeping boarders, working in cotton mills, in bookbinderies, typesetting and household service) only one was representative of the new industrial condition which today affects so profoundly the feminine physique. And to the daughters of a nation that was still imbued with the pioneer spirit, work in cotton mills appealed so little that they undertook it only for unusually high pay. Anyone of that period seeing the

red-cheeked, robust, intelligent, happy girl operatives of Lowell might have dismissed his fears of the factory as a sinister influence in the development of American womanhood and gone on to dream, with Walt Whitman, of a race of "fierce, athletic girls."

But two things happened. With the growing flood of immigration, the factories were abandoned more and more to the "foreigners," the native-born citizens losing their pride in the excellence of working conditions and the character of the operatives. And all the while the factory was becoming more and more an integral part of our civilization, demanding larger and larger multitudes of girls and women to attend its machinery. So that, with the enormous development of industry since the Civil War, the factory has become the chief field of feminine endeavor in America. In spite of the great opening up of all sorts of work to

women, in spite of the store, the office, the studio, the professions, still the factory remains most important in any consideration of the health and strength of women.

If the greatest part of our womankind spends its life in factories, and if it further appears that this is no temporary situation, but (practically speaking) a permanent one, then it becomes necessary to inquire how far the factory is hindering the creation of that ideal womanhood which Walt Whitman predicted for us.

As opposed to the old-fashioned method of manufacture in the home (or the sweat-shop, which is the modern equivalent), the factory often shows a gain in light and air, a decrease of effort, an added leisure; while, on the other hand, there is a considerable loss of individual freedom and an increase in monotony. But child labor, a too long working day, bad working conditions, lack of protection from fire, personal exploitation by fore-

men, inhumanly low wages, and all sorts of petty injustice, though not essential to the system, are prominent features of factory work as it generally exists.

People who consider every factory an Inferno, however, and have only pity for its workers, are far from understanding the situation. Here is a field of work which is capable of competing successfully with domestic service, and even of attracting girls from homes where there exists no absolute necessity for women's wages. Yet at its contemporary best, with a ten-hour law in operation, efficient factory inspection, decent working conditions and a just and humane management, the factory remains an institution extremely perilous to the Whitmanic ideal of womanhood.

But there are women who, undaunted by the new conditions brought about by a changing economic system, seize upon those very conditions to use them as the means to

their end: such a woman is Mrs. Robins. Has a new world, bounded by factory walls and noisy with the roar of machinery, grown up about us, to keep women from their heritage? She will help them to use those very walls and that very machinery to achieve their destiny, a destiny of which a physical well-being is, as Walt Whitman knew it to be, the most certain symbol.

The factory already gives women a certain independence. It may yet give them pleasure, the joy of creation. Indeed, it must, when the workers require it; and those who are most likely to require it are the women workers.

It is well known that with the ultra-development of the machine, the subdivision of labor, the régime of piecework, it has become practically impossible for the worker to take any artistic pleasure in his product. It is not so well known how necessary such pleasure in the product is to the physical

well-being of women — how utterly disastrous to their nervous organization is the monotony and irresponsibility of piecework. This method — which men workers have grumbled at, but to which they seem to have adjusted themselves — bears its fruits among women in neurasthenia, headaches, and the derangement of the organs which are the basis of their different nervous constitution. It is sufficiently clear to those who have seen the personal reactions of working girls to the piecework system, that when women attain, as men in various industries have attained, the practical management of the factory, piecework will get a setback.

But not merely good conditions, not merely a living wage, not merely a ten or an eight hour day — all that self-government in the shop can bring is the object of the Women's Trade Union League.

"The chief social gain of the union shop," says Mrs. Robins, "is not its generally bet-

ter wages and shorter hours, but rather the incentive it offers for initiative and social leadership, the call it makes, through the common industrial relationship and the common hope, upon the moral and reasoning faculties, and the sense of fellowship, independence and group strength it develops. In every workshop of say thirty girls there is undreamed of initiative and capacity for social leadership and control—unknown wealth of intellectual and moral resources."

It is, in fact, this form of activity which to many thousands of factory girls makes the difference between living and existing, between a painful, necessary drudgery and a happy exertion of all their faculties. It can give them a more useful education than any school, a more vital faith than any church, a more invigorating sense of power than any other career open to them.

To do all these things it must be indigenous to working-class soil. No benefaction

originating in the philanthropic motives of middle-class people, no enterprise of patronage, will ever have any such meaning. A movement, to have such meaning, must be of the working class, and by the working class, as well as for the working class. It must be imbued with working-class feeling, and it must subserve working-class ideals.

It is the distinction of Mrs. Robins that she has seen this. She has gone to the workers to learn rather than to teach — she has sought to unfold the ideals and capacities latent in working girls rather than impress upon them the alien ideals and capacities of another class.

"Just" — it is Mrs. Robins that speaks — "as under a despotic church and a feudal state the possible power and beauty of the common people was denied expression, so under industrial feudalism the intellectual and moral powers of the workers are slowly choked to death, with incalculable loss to the

individual and the race. It is easy to kill; it requires a great spirit as well as a great mind to arouse the dormant energies, to vitalize them and to make them creative forces for good."

One is reminded of the words of John Galsworthy, addressed to workingwomen: "There is beginning to be a little light in the sky; whether the sun is ever to break through depends on your constancy, and courage, and wisdom. The future is in your hands more than in the hands of men; it rests on your virtues and well-being, rather than on the virtues and the welfare of men, for it is you who produce and mold the Future."

There are 6,000,000 working women in the United States, and half of them are girls under 21. One may go out any day in the city streets, at morning or noon or evening, and look at a representative hundred of them. The factories have not been

able to rob them of beauty and strength and the charm of femininity, and in that beauty and strength and charm there is a world of promise. And that promise already begins to be unfolded when to them comes Mrs. Robins with a gospel germane to their natures, saying, "Long enough have you dreamed contemptible dreams."

# CHAPTER VII

## ELLEN KEY

IN these chapters a sincere attempt has been made not so much to show what a few exceptional women have accomplished as to exhibit through a few prominent figures the essential nature of women, and to show what may be expected from a future in which women will have a larger freedom and a larger influence.

It has been pointed out that the peculiar idealism of women is one that works itself out through the materials of workaday life, and which seeks to break or remake those materials by way of fulfilling that idealism; it has been shown that this idealism, as contrasted with the more abstract and creative idealism of men, deserves to be called practicalism, a practicalism of a noble and beau-

tiful sort which we are far from appreciating; and as complementing these forms of activity, the play instinct, the instinct of recreation, has been pointed out as the parallel to the creative or poetic instinct of men.

Woman as reconstructor of domestic economics, woman as a destructive political agent of enormous potency, woman as worker, woman as dancer, woman as statistician, woman as organizer of the forces of labor—in these it has been the intent to show the real woman of today and of tomorrow.

There have been other aspects of her deserving of attention in such a series, notably her aspect as mother and as educator. If she has not been shown as poet, as artist, as scientist, as talker (for talk is a thing quite as important as poetry or science or art), it has not been so much because of an actual lack of specific examples of women distin-

guished in these fields as because of the unrepresentative character of such examples.

Here, then, is a man's view of modern woman. To complete that view, to round off that conception, I now speak of Ellen Key.

Her writings have had a peculiar career in America, one which perhaps prevents a clear understanding of their character. On the one hand, they have seemed to many to be radically "advanced"; to thousands of middle-class women, who have heard vaguely of these new ideas, and who have secretly and strongly desired to know more of them, her "Love and Marriage" has come as a revolutionary document, the first outspoken word of scorn for conventional morality, the first call to them to take their part in the breaking of new paths.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that America is the home of Mormonism, of the Oneida Community, of the Woodhull and Claflin "free-love" movement of the

'70s, of "Dianism" and a hundred other obscure but pervasive sexual cults — in short, of movements of greater or less respectability, capable of giving considerable currency to their beliefs. And they have given considerable currency to their beliefs. In spite of the dominant tone of Puritanism in American thought, our social life has been affected to an appreciable extent by these beliefs.

And these beliefs may be summed up hastily, but, on the whole, justly, as materialistic — in the common and unfavorable sense. They have converged, from one direction or another, upon the opinion that sex is an animal function, no more sacred than any other animal function, which, by a ridiculous overestimation, is made to give rise to jealousy, unhappiness, madness, vice, and crime.

It is a fact that the Puritan temperament readily finds this opinion, if not the program which accompanies it, acceptable, as

one may discover in private conversation with respectable Puritans of both sexes. And it is more unfortunately true that the present-day rebellion against conventional morality in America has found, in Hardy and Shaw and other anti-romanticists, a seeming support of this opinion. So that one finds in America today (though some people may not know about it) an undercurrent of impatient materialism in matters of sex. To become freed from the inadequate morality of Puritanism is, for thousands of young people, to adopt another morality which is, if more sound in many ways, certainly as inadequate as the other.

So that Ellen Key comes into the lives of many in this country as a conservative force, holding up a spiritual ideal, the ideal of monogamy, and defending it with a breadth of view, a sanity, and a fervor that make it something different from the cold institution which these readers have come to despise.

She makes every allowance for human nature, every concession to the necessities of temperament, every recognition of the human need for freedom, and yet makes the love of one man and one woman seem the highest ideal, a thing worth striving and waiting and suffering for.

She cherishes the spiritual magic of sex as the finest achievement of the race, and sees it as the central and guiding principle in our social and economic evolution. She seeks to construct a new morality which will do what the present one only pretends, and with the shallowest and most desperately pitiful of pretenses, to do. She would help our struggling generation to form a new code of ethics, and one of subtle stringency, in this most important and difficult of relations.

Thus her writings, of which "Love and Marriage" will here be taken as representative, have a twofold aspect — the radical and

the conservative. But of the two, the conservative is by far the truer. It is as a conservator, with too firm a grip on reality to be lured into the desertion of any real values so far achieved by the race, that she may be best considered.

And germane to her conservatism, which is the true conservatism of her sex, is her intellectual habit, her literary method. She is not a logician, it is true. She lacks logic, and with it order and clearness and precision, because of the very fact of her firm hold on realities. The realities are too complex to be brought into any completely logical and orderly relation, too elusive to be stated with utter precision. There is a whole universe in "Love and Marriage"; and it resembles the universe in its wildness, its tumultuousness, its contradictory quality. Her book, like the universe, is in a state of flux—it refuses to remain one fixed and dead thing. It is a book which in spite of

some attempt at arrangement may be begun at any point and read in any order. It is a mixture of science, sociology, and mysticism; it has a wider range than an orderly book could possibly have; it touches more points, includes more facts, and is more convincing, in its queer way, than any other.

"Love and Marriage" is the Talmud of sexual morality. It contains history, wisdom, poetry, psychological analysis, shrewd judgments, generous sympathies, . . . and it all bears upon the creation of that new sexual morality for which in a thousand ways — economic, artistic, and spiritual — we are so astonishing a mixture of readiness and unreadiness.

Ellen Key is fundamentally a conservator. But she is careful about what she conservates. It is the right to love which she would have us cherish, rather than the right to own another person — the beauty of singleness of devotion rather than the cruel

habit of trying to force people to carry out rash promises made in moments of exaltation. She conserves the greatest things and lets the others go: motherhood, as against the exclusive right of married women to bear children; and that personal passion which is at once physical and spiritual rather than any of the legally standardized relations. Nor does she hesitate to speak out for the conservation of that old custom which persists among peasant and primitive peoples all over the world and which has been reintroduced to the public by a recent sociologist under the term of "trial marriage"; it must be held, she says, as the bulwark against the corruption of prostitution and made a part of the new morality.

It is perhaps in this very matter that her attitude is capable of being most bitterly resented. For we have lost our sense of what is old and good, and we give the sanction of ages to parvenu virtues that are as

degraded as the rococo ornaments which were born in the same year. We have (or the Puritans among us have) lost all moral sense in the true meaning of the word, in that we are unable to tell good from bad if it be not among the things that were socially respectable in the year 1860. Ellen Key writes: "The most delicate test of a person's sense of morality is his power in interpreting ambiguous signs in the ethical sphere; for only the profoundly moral can discover the dividing line, sharp as the edge of a sword, between new morality and old immorality. In our time, ethical obtuseness betrays itself first and foremost by the condemnation of those young couples who freely unite their destinies. The majority does not perceive the advance in morality which this implies in comparison with the code of so many men who, without responsibility — and without apparent risk — purchase the repose of their senses. The free union of

love, on the other hand, gives them an enhancement of life which they consider that they gain without injuring anyone. It answers to their idea of love's chastity, an idea which is justly offended by the incompleteness of the period of engagement, with all its losses in the freshness and frankness of emotion. When their soul has found another soul, when the senses of both have met in a common longing, then they consider that they have a right to full unity of love, although compelled to secrecy, since the conditions of society render early marriage impossible. They are thus freed from a wasteful struggle which would give them neither peace nor inner purity, and which would be doubly hard for them, since they have attained the end — love — for the sake of which self-control would have been imposed."

It is almost impossible to quote any passage from "Love and Marriage" which

is not subject to further practical modification, or which does not present an incomplete idea of which the complement may be found somewhere else. Even this passage is one which states a brief for the younger generation rather than the author's whole opinion. Still, with all these limitations, her view is one which is so different from that commonly held by women that it may seem merely fantastic to hold it up as an example of the conservative instinct of women. Nevertheless, it is so. It must be remembered that the view which holds that the chastity of unmarried women is well purchased at the price of prostitution, is a masculine view. It is a piece of the sinister and cruel idealism of the male mind, divorced (as the male mind is so capable of being) from realities. No woman would ever have created prostitution to preserve the chastity of part of her sex; and the more familiar one becomes with the specific character of the

feminine mind, the more impossible does it seem that women will, when they have come to think and act for themselves, permanently maintain it. Nor will they—one is forced to believe—hesitate long at the implications of that demolition.

No, I think that with the advent of women into a larger life our jerry-built virtues will have to go, to make room for mansions and gardens fit to be inhabited by the human soul.

It will be like the pulling down of a rotten tenement. First (with a great shocked outcry from some persons of my own sex) the façade goes, looking nice enough, but showing up for painted tin what pretended to be marble; then the dark, cavelike rooms exposed, with their blood-stained floors and their walls ineffectually papered over the accumulated filth and disease; and so on, lath by lath, down to the cellars, with their hints of unspeakable horrors in the dark.

It is to this conclusion that these chapters draw: That women have a surer instinct than men for the preservation of the truest human values, but that their very acts of conservation will seem to the timid minds among us like the shattering of all virtues, the debacle of civilization, the Götterdämmerung!

## CHAPTER VIII

### FREEWOMEN AND DORA MARSDEN

THIS is by way of a postscript. Dora Marsden is a new figure in the feminist movement. Just how she evolved is rather hard to say. Her family were Radicals, it seems, smug British radicals; and she broke away, first of all, into a sort of middle class socialism. She went into settlement work. Here, it seems, she discovered what sort of person she really was.

She was a lover of freedom. So of course she rebelled against the interference of the middle class with the affairs of the poor, and threw overboard her settlement work and her socialism together. She was a believer in woman suffrage, but the autocratic government of the organization irked her. And, besides, she felt constrained to point

out that feminism meant worlds more than a mere vote. The position of woman, not indeed as the slave of man, but as the enslaver of man, but with the other end of the chain fastened to her own wrist, and depriving her quite effectually of her liberties—this irritated her. Independence to her meant achievement, and when she heard the talk about "motherhood" by which the women she knew excused their lack of achievement, she was annoyed. Finally, the taboo upon the important subject of sex exasperated her. So she started a journal to express her discontent with all these things, and to change them.

Naturally, she called her journal The Freewoman. "Independent" expresses much of Dora Marsden's feeling, but that word has been of late dragged in a mire of pettiness and needs dry cleaning. It has come to signify a woman who isn't afraid to go out at night alone or who holds a position

downtown. A word had to be chosen which had in it some suggestion of the heroic. Hence The Freewoman.

The Freewoman was a weekly. It lived several months and then suspended publication, and now all the women I know are poring over the back numbers while waiting for it to start again as a fortnightly. It was a remarkable paper. For one thing, it threw open its columns to such a discussion of sex that dear Mrs. Humphry Ward wrote a shocked letter to The Times about it. Of course, a good many of the ideas put forth in this correspondence were erroneous or trivial, but it must have done the writers no end of good to express themselves freely. For once sex was on a plane with other subjects, a fact making tremendously for sanity. In this Miss Marsden not only achieved a creditable journalistic feat, but performed a valuable public service.

Her editorials were another distinctive

thing. In the first issue was an editorial on "Bondwomen," from which it would appear that perhaps even such advanced persons as you, my dear lady, are still far from free.

"Bondwomen are distinguished from Freewomen by a spiritual distinction. Bondwomen are the women who are not separate spiritual entities—who are not individuals. They are complements merely. By habit of thought, by form of activity, and largely by preference, they round off the personality of some other individual, rather than create or cultivate their own. Most women, as far back as we have any record, have fitted into this conception, and it has borne itself out in instinctive working practice.

"And in the midst of all this there comes a cry that woman is an individual, and that because she is an individual she must be set free. It would be nearer the

truth to say that if she is an individual she *is* free, and will act like those who are free. The doubtful aspect in the situation is as to whether women are or can be individuals —that is, free—and whether there is not danger, under the circumstances, in labelling them free, thus giving them the liberty of action which is allowed to the free. It is this doubt and fear which is behind the opposition which is being offered the vanguard of those who are 'asking for' freedom. It is the kind of fear which an engineer would have in guaranteeing an arch equal to a strain above its strength. The opponents of the Freewomen are not actuated by spleen or by stupidity, but by dread. This dread is founded upon ages of experience with a being who, however well loved, has been known to be an inferior, and who has accepted all the conditions of inferiors. Women, women's intelligence, and women's judgments have always been regarded with

more or less secret contempt, and when woman now speaks of 'equality,' all the natural contempt which a higher order feels for a lower order when it presumes bursts out into the open. This contempt rests upon quite honest and sound instinct, so honest, indeed, that it must provide all the charm of an unaccustomed sensation for fine gentlemen like the Curzons and Cromers and Asquiths to feel anything quite so instinctive and primitive.

"With the women opponents it is another matter. These latter apart, however, it is for would-be Freewomen to realize that for them this contempt is the healthiest thing in the world, and that those who express it honestly feel it; that these opponents have argued quite soundly that women have allowed themselves to be used, ever since there has been any record of them; and that if women had had higher uses of their own they would not have foregone them. They

have never known women to formulate imperious wants, this in itself implying lack of wants, and this in turn implying lack of ideals. Women as a whole have shown nothing save 'servant' attributes. All those activities which presuppose the master qualities, the standard-making, the law-giving, the moral-framing, belong to men. Religions, philosophies, legal codes, standards in morals, canons in art, have all issued from men, while women have been the 'followers,' 'believers,' the 'law-abiding,' the 'moral,' the conventionally admiring. They have been the administrators, the servants, living by borrowed precept, receiving orders, doing hodmen's work. For note, though some men must be servants, all women are servants, and all the masters are men. That is the difference and distinction. The servile condition is common to all women."

This was only the beginning of such a campaign of radical propaganda as femin-

ism never knew before. Miss Marsden went on to attack all the things which bind women and keep them unfree. As such she denounced what she considered the cant of "motherhood."

"Considering, therefore, that children, from both physiological and psychological points of view, belong more to the woman than to the man; considering, too, that not only does she need them more, but, as a rule, wants them more than the man, the parental situation begins to present elements of humor when the woman proceeds to fasten upon the man, in return for the children she has borne him, the obligation from that time to the end of her days, not only for the children's existence, but for her own, also!"

When asked under what conditions, then, women should have children, she replied that women who wanted them should save for them as for a trip to Europe. This is

frankly a gospel for a minority—a fact which does not invalidate it in the eyes of its promulgator—but she does believe that if women are to become the equals of men they must find some way to have children without giving up the rest of life. It has been done!

Then, having been rebuked for her critical attitude toward the woman suffrage organization, she showed herself in no mood to take orders from even that source. She subjected the attitude of the members of the organization to an examination, and found it tainted with sentimentalism. "Of all the corruptions to which the woman's movement is now open," she wrote, "the most poisonous and permeating is that which flows from sentimentalism, and it is in the W. S. P. U. [Women's Social and Political Union] that sentimentalism is now rampant. . . . It is this sentimentalism that is abhorrent

to us. We fight it as we would fight prostitution, or any other social disease."

She called upon women to be individuals, and sought to demolish in their minds any lingering desire for Authority. "There is," she wrote, "a genuine pathos in our reliance upon the law in regard to the affairs of our own souls. Our belief in ourselves and in our impulses is so frail that we prefer to see it buttressed up. We are surer of our beliefs when we see their lawfulness symbolized in the respectable blue cloth of the policeman's uniform, and the sturdy good quality of the prison's walls. The law gives them their passport. Well, perhaps in this generation, for all save pioneers, the law will continue to give its protecting shelter, but with the younger generations we believe we shall see a stronger, prouder, and more insistent people, surer of themselves and of the pureness of their own desires."

She did not stick at the task of formulating for women a new moral attitude to replace the old. "We are seeking," she said, "a morality which shall be able to point the way out of the social trap we find we are in. We are conscious that we are concerned in the dissolution of one social order, which is giving way to another. Men and women are both involved, but women differently from men, because women themselves are very different from men. The difference between men and women is the whole difference between a religion and a moral code. Men are pagan. They have never been Christian. Women are wholly Christian, and have assimilated the entire genius of Christianity.

"The ideal of conduct which men have followed has been one of self-realization, tempered by a broad principle of equity which has been translated into practice by means of a code of laws. A man's desire

and ideal has been to satisfy the wants which a consciousness of his several senses gives rise to. His vision of attainment has therefore been a sensuous one, and if in his desire for attainment he has transgressed the law, his transgression has sat but lightly upon him. A law is an objective thing, laid upon a man's will from outside. It does not enter the inner recesses of consciousness, as does a religion. It is nothing more than a body of prohibitions and commands, which can be obeyed, transgressed or evaded with little injury to the soul. With women moral matters have been wholly different. Resting for support upon a religion, their moral code has received its sanction and force from within. It has thus laid hold on consciousness with a far more tenacious grip. Their code being subjective, transgression has meant a darkening of the spirit, a sullying of the soul. Thus the doctrine of self-renunciation, which is the outstanding fea-

ture of Christian ethics, has had the most favorable circumstances to insure its realization, and with women it has won completely — so completely that it now exerts its influence unconsciously. Seeking the realization of the will of others, and not their own, ever waiting upon the minds of others, women have almost lost the instinct for self-realization, the instinct for achievement in their own persons."

Whether she is right is a moot question. Certainly in such matters as testimony in court, the customs-tariff, and the minor city ordinances, women show no particular respect for the law. Ibsen sought in "The Doll's House" to show that her morality had no connection with the laws of the world of men. Even in matters of human relationship it is doubtful if women give any more of an "inner assent" to law than do men. Woman's failure to achieve that domination of the world which constitutes indi-

viduality and freedom — this Dora Marsden would explain on the ground of a dulling of the senses. It may be more easily explained as a result of a dulling of the imagination. The trouble is that they are content with petty conquests.

There you have it! Inevitably one argues with Dora Marsden. That is her value. She provokes thought. And she welcomes it. She wants everybody to think — not to think her thoughts necessarily, nor the right thoughts always, but that which they can and must. She is a propagandist, it is true. But she does not create a silence, and call it conversion.

She stimulates her readers to cast out the devils that inhabit their souls — fear, prejudice, sensitiveness. She helps them to build up their lives on a basis of will — the exercise, not the suppression, of will. She indurates them to the world. She liberates them to life. She is the Max Stirner of feminism.

Freedom! That is the first word and the last with Dora Marsden. She makes women understand for the first time what freedom means. She makes them want to be free. She nerves them to the effort of emancipation. She sows in a fertile soil the dragon's teeth which shall spring up as a band of capable females, knowing what they want and taking it, asking no leave from anybody, doing things and enjoying life—Freewomen!

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